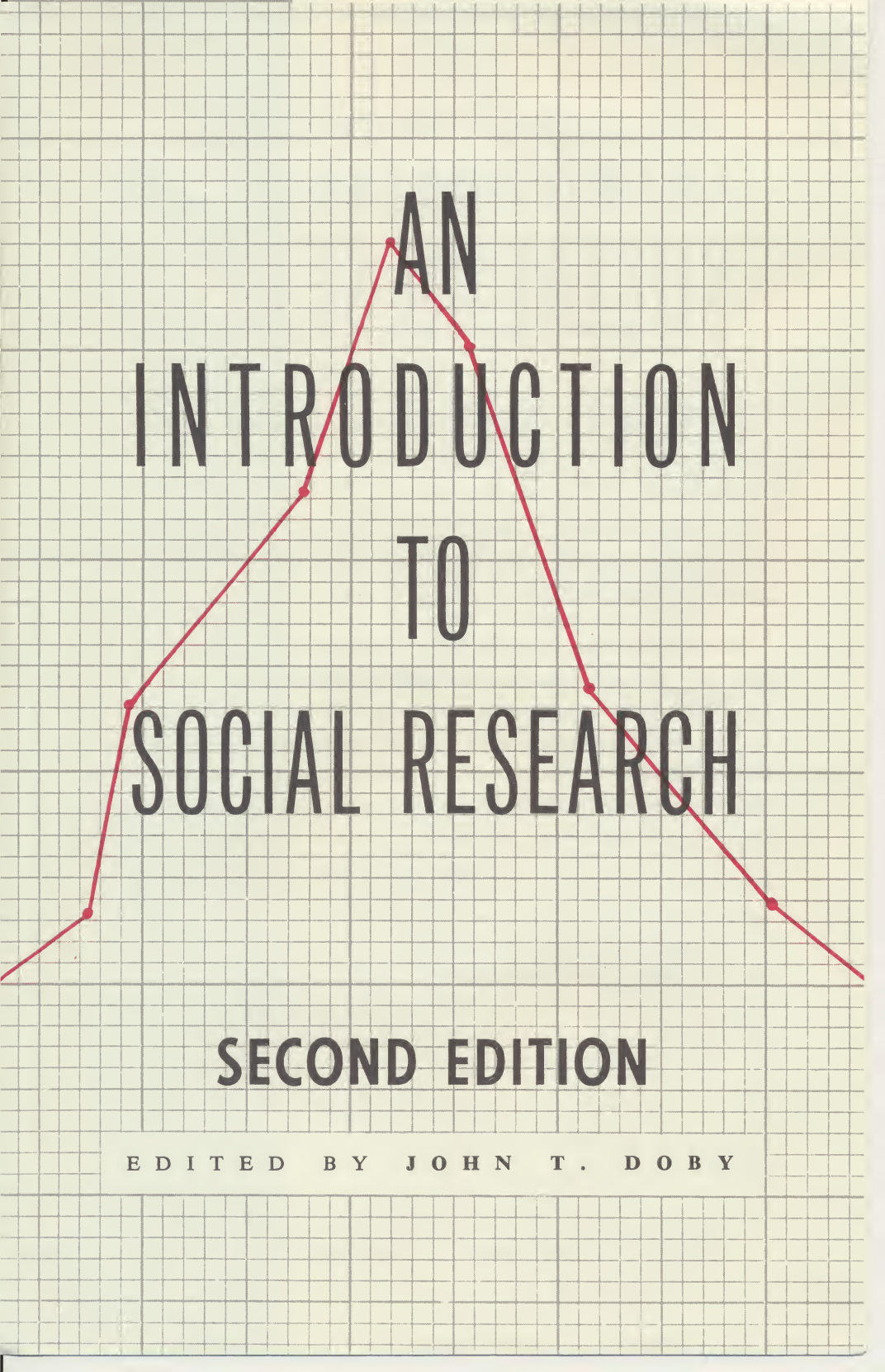
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contributors:

John P. Dean

Lois R. Dean

Dr. Dean is Associate Director for Research in the Office of Educational Research at Antioch College, where she is Assistant Professor in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology.

John T. Doby

Professor and Chairman of the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Emory University, Dr. Doby is the author of *Introduction to Social Psychology*.

Robert L. Eichhorn

Dr. Eichhorn is Professor of Sociology at Purdue University.

Roy G. Francis

Dean of the College of Letters and Science, and Professor of Sociology at The University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, Dr. Francis is also the author of *Beginning Social Statistics,* among other volumes.

John C. Mc Kinney

Dr. Mc Kinney is Professor and Chairman of the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Duke University. He is the author of several books, including *Constructive Typology* and, with Frank T. De Vyver, of *Aging and Social Policy*.

Edward A. Suchman

Professor of Sociology at the University of Pittsburgh, Dr. Suchman is also the author of *Sociology and the Field of Public Health* and *Accident Research*.

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ROAD TO SUSPICION

GUNTER W. REMMLING

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A STUDY OF MODERN MENTALITY AND THE SOCIOLOGY OF KNOWLEDGE

This outstanding work presents, for the first time, a systematic study of the sociology of knowledge. It investigates the growth of phenomena that have come to occupy a central place in the crisis of our time — doubt and suspicion.

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GUNTER W. REMMLING is Associate Professor in the Department of Sociology at Southern Illinois University (Edwardsville). He received his Ph.D. from the Free University of Berlin, where he was a Research Associate at the Institute of Political Science. Dr. Remmling is a distinguished contributor to literary journals in the United States and abroad.

The Sociology of Religion



AN ANTHOLOGY

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RICHARD D. KNUDTEN

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from the INTRODUCTION

Sociological analysis of religion in America poses problems not present in other societies. Religious forms are diversified. Multiple value systems are often in conflict. Variables of class, education, income, race, and interest compound investigation. The severe fragmentation of religious groups and the rise of diverse sects has made a monolithic analysis of religion impossible. The field is too vast, variables too many, and social change too sweeping to allow easy definition and generalization.

Six inclusive articles basic to an understanding of religion in America are presented in Part I, The Current State of Religion and the Sociology of Religion. Although they are largely descriptive and analytical, they identify some of the problems, aims, and approaches of the sociologist of religion. Sydney Ahlstrom presents an analysis of the major themes common in present-day religion. He identifies the changes that have occurred in religion since the turn of the century and the relationship of these changes to current religious practice. Liston Pope traces the history of the Negro American and the rise of the Negro church. In doing so, he discusses the religious basis of Negro leadership in the immediate Civil Rights struggle. J. Milton Yinger analyzes the status and content of the sociology of religion. He defines the basic processes of scientific research and notes the central problems of the social scientist. Although such a study offers major theoretical and methodological problems, Yinger suggests areas of investigation and hypotheses for future research, setting forth the scope of modern sociological investigation. Glenn Vernon offers an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the direct and indirect approaches to religious investigation. He makes clear that the value of any research depends upon adequate research design and methodology. Gibson Winter discusses two current major sociological volumes on religion and contrasts their findings in an attempt to ascertain tenable interpretations of seemingly contradictory research and analysis. Winter notes that diversity of findings may lead to a unity of understanding if findings are interpreted with the necessary precision and within the context of a research design. William Petersen identifies the data-gathering problems that hinder research in American religion. Although the focus of his article centers upon the need for a national census, his writing gives insight into the diversity and some of the problems of religion at the present time.



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